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DR. LETTSOM'S

ADDRESS TO PARENTS, &c.

ON

VARIOLOUS AND VACCINE INOCULATIONS.

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A N  
ADDRESS,

TO

*PARENTS and GUARDIANS of CHILDREN,  
and OTHERS*

ON

VARIOLOUS AND VACCINE INOCULATIONS.

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BY

JOHN COAKLEY LETTSOM, M.D. &c.

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1803.



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AN  
ADDRESS, &c.

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FROM THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE,  
FOR NOVEMBER, 1802.

WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES.

*Sambrook-house, Oct. 30.*

AS many thousands of the Gentleman's Magazine issue monthly from the press, and as it is one of those periodical publications not only generally read, but likewise preserved as a repository of information; I am desirous of conveying to the publick, through this extensive medium, some observations on the Small-pox, and its increasing fatality: I say *increasing*, because from conversation with medical practitioners, added to my own experience, I am of opinion, that more patients have died of late years of the Small-pox, than formerly, in proportion

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portion to the number attacked by it; as well as by Inoculation in proportion to the number inoculated. It has been calculated, that about one in ten fell victims to this scourge of human existence, and of late, about one in eight. The calculation of deaths by Inoculation has been one in 500, and is now at least one in 300 \*. Hence we may rationally and piously view the recent discovery of Vaccine Inoculation, or the art of conveying the Cow-pock from one human being to another, as truly opportune and providential!

The whole number of deaths every year in Britain by the Small-pox is about 36,000; in London alone about 3000; and in all Europe, in the same ratio of population, about 470,000;

\* From the Report of the Central Committee at Paris, on the subject of the Vaccine or Cow-pock, made on the 24th of November, 1802, it appears, that nearly one half of the deaths have been by the Small-pox. In four months the total deaths were 5463. Of the Small-pox 1417. In some parts of the city, in 2681 deaths, 923 were by the Small-pox; and these, chiefly, the rising generation, upon whom depends the future population and support of every country. Besides this immense number of lives annually destroyed in one quarter only of the world, it has been calculated that as many more are ruined in their health, by blindness, evil, and other maladies brought on by the virulence of the Small-pox.

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the lives of every one of whom might have been saved by the practice of Vaccine Inoculation.

PARENTS and GUARDIANS of children ! if you allow them to take the Small-pox, and they should die of it, are not you accessory to their deaths ? As the Vaccine Inoculation is a certain security against the Small-pox ; as it introduces no constitutional disease or blemish, and never is fatal ; what apology can you offer for neglecting the means of prevention and security \* ? Parents are placed, by the

\* Since the insertion of this essay in the Gentleman's Magazine, I have seen a discourse by the respectable Dr. Booker, minister of the chapel of St. Edmund, in Dudley, who observes, on the mildness of the Cow-pock, that, " as  
 " it comes like a friendly guest that tarrieth but a day, un-  
 " attended by danger ; it departs and leaves behind it no  
 " ground for regret ; but, on the contrary, much for sa-  
 " tisfaction and joy at its visit—imparting to every indi-  
 " vidual who has received it into his constitution, the bleff-  
 " ing of stable security from one of the deadliest foes of  
 " the human species. As the blood of the Paschal Lamb  
 " averted the avenging sword from the dwellings where it  
 " was seen, so a merciful God has, apparently, vouchsafed  
 " this blessing, to preserve the rising and every future gene-  
 " ration of men from that despoiler of loveliness, and be-  
 " reaver of life, whose long and fatal reign it seems def-  
 " tined to terminate."

Almighty Giver of human life, as guardians over both the body and mind of their children; they nurture them in infancy, they educate them, and direct the bias of their minds; they clothe and protect them from the inclemency of the elements; and ought, as much as in them lies, to keep their bodies free from distempers. They cannot now plead ignorance \*. The evidence of 200,000 witnesses, who have received the Cow-pock with perfect safety, constitute a charge of neglect wherever children have been suffered to die by the Small-pox. True it is, I continually hear the pathetic exclamation of parents when it is too late, "Oh that my lost child had been inoculated with the Cow-pock!" We read, however, in the last week's report in the bill of mortality, of 81 deaths by the Small-pox †!

\* That some mistakes may have occurred from the indiscriminate practice of persons not experienced in the application of the Cow-pock, may be admitted; it is, however, rather a matter of surprize, that more mistakes have not been made, under the circumstances of a new discovery; but which will, in future, be guarded against.

† Another Bill of Mortality for the subsequent week has appeared; by this account 72 only have died by the Small-pox within the week, or little more than 10 a day; making the whole number of victims by the Small-pox in 14 days 153, or about 11 each day.

Painful



Painful to reflect, that in this enlightened Metropolis eleven helpless children should be suffered to expire daily under this fatal scourge ! Such alarming instances of mortality should rouse every one who wishes well to his country, and to the human race in general.—*Magistrates*, I call upon you who superintend the government of the City ; upon *Pastors*, you who influence morality and conscience ; as well as invoke the *Legislators* of the Nation, to avert these dreadful events.

MAGISTRATES ! your office is more dignified and important than that of conveying a convict to the place of execution. May you spare some moments to the information of those untutored individuals within your jurisdiction ; who, poor and ignorant as they may be, constitute an industrious and useful part of the community ; who, by your influence, might be directed to self-preservation ! If you hear of a single murder having been perpetrated by a hardened villain, or of an infant destroyed by an abandoned mother, your endeavours are laudably exerted to discover and punish these depraved delinquents ; and your moral feelings are excited by the sentiment of blood for blood. What emotions must then be produced

by the reports, in the Bills of Mortality, of so many persons daily falling victims to the Small-pox in the Metropolis over which you preside! In a free country, you cannot legally compel your fellow citizens to save the lives of their children, though your exertions and example might influence the multitude; and a portion of that munificence, which you in your public and private capacities dispense in the promotion of great and charitable institutions, so honourable to the Corporation and to individuals, might be directed to the extension of Vaccine Inoculation, by which you would be the medium of rescuing from the grave almost as many lives in one month as there are days in a whole year \*!

PASTORS †! ye, to whom thousands daily listen, remember the declaration of your Divine  
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\* The City of London has recently voted five hundred pounds towards the support of the Royal Jennerian Society.

† I have this moment seen "An Address from a Country Minister to his Parishioners, on the subject of the "Cow-pock, or Vaccine Inoculation, by Thomas Alston Warren, B. D. Printed for Rivington. Price four pence, or twenty-five for six shillings." This interesting and persuasive Address cannot be perused without conviction in the propriety of general Vaccine Inoculation, which  
pro-

Master, who “came to save, not to destroy  
 “men’s lives.” Your brethren of Geneva †  
 have considered the promulgation of Vaccine  
 Inoculation as a part of their sacred office; for  
 what approximates man nearer to his God,  
 than saving the lives of his fellow-creatures?

LEGISLATORS! ye, who penetrate into all  
 the ramifications of Finance; and whose at-  
 tention is exercised in framing laws for the se-  
 curity of property; the extension of commerce;  
 and the accumulation of wealth; recollect, that  
 in proportion to the number of inhabitants, and  
 to their useful employment, is centered the  
 wealth of a Nation; and that, by your attention  
 to Vaccine Inoculation, you may in a century  
 double the population of this kingdom. You  
 offer premiums to encourage trade. A small

probably would sooner be effected by the Clergy uniting  
 to promote this great discovery, than by any efforts of the  
 professors of Medicine, whose attempts to exterminate a  
 disease, which is one of the most productive sources of their  
 pecuniary emolument, afford an example of patriotism  
 and disinterestedness in a whole body, perhaps without  
 parallel in history; an example so unusual, as even to ex-  
 cite suspicion in many that there must exist with the  
 Faculty some hidden sinister views, which they could not  
 attach to the Clergy.

† See the annexed Recommendation.



aid from Government, to promote this discovery, would enlarge the number of those who constitute the agency and means of trade.

Were individuals in power and wealth unitedly to extend the means of Vaccine Inoculation among the lower classes of people, its success would soon induce them more universally to adopt it as a providential boon.

Both high and low have still prejudices to overcome. How often do we hear individuals exclaim, “ *that they would not have a beastly disease for the world !*” But when they reflect that they drink the milk of the cow, eat cheese made from milk, and the flesh of this healthy animal, these prejudices must undoubtedly subside \*. Sometimes they say, “ *they will trust to Providence, and not bring on a new disease.*” As to trusting to Providence, it behoves every human being ; but this should encourage us to exert our endeavours to promote providential designs. He gives us powers and inclinations to clothe ourselves, to defend us from the inclemency of the weather. Houses are built to

\* Its success, indeed, has been so obvious, whilst the malignity of the Small-pox has been so impressive, that very recently the prejudices against the Cow-pock have subsided, and a partiality for Vaccine Inoculation has happily become generally prevalent.



protect us from rain and storms, cold and heat. And if these endeavours are crowned with health and comfort, should we not, in a particular manner, exert ourselves to protect the lives of our helpless children, who, without our aid in various ways, would be daily dying around us? It is, therefore, our duty to co-operate with the goodness of Providence, who has afforded us the knowledge and the means of communicating to our children the Cow-pock, which is no disease; as a preventive against the Small-pox, the most malignant of all diseases \*.

It

\* The Preacher I have already mentioned remarks upon the popular and prevailing opinion, the apparent presumption of preventing one disease by introducing another, "Almighty God," says the objector, "best knows *when* and *with what* diseases to visit mankind; therefore for us to bring a disease, either upon ourselves or upon our children, *prematurely*, is wickedly to oppose the will and wisdom of God."

If this objection have any weight, it is equally wicked and presumptuous to *remove* sicknesses and diseases, as being visitations of God; equally wicked and presumptuous to guard against the effects of an hurricane, a thunder-storm, or an earthquake, where God thinks proper to send them. But it is *not* presumptuous to avail ourselves of the discoveries of the wise, which "God, that teacheth man knowledge, enables them to make for the benefit of society. On the contrary, it were presumptuous to  
*refuse*

It was the practice formerly to attempt lessening the danger of the Small-pox by inoculating persons with it; but this often proved fatal, and it is always infectious; by which property, instead of diminishing the Small-pox, it has tended to spread it, as appears by the induction delivered into the House of Commons by the Committee on Dr. Jenner's petition, in consequence of a table presented to the Committee:

“ As a comparison between this new practice and the inoculated Small-pox forms a principal consideration in the present enquiry, some facts with regard to the latter engaged the attention of your Committee; and they have inserted in the Appendix, No. 44, statements of the mortality occasioned by the Small-pox in forty-two years, from 1731 to 1772; the result of which appears to be an increase of deaths amounting to seventeen in every thousand; the general average giving seventy-two in every thousand

“ *refuse the adoption* of those discoveries, as it implies a  
 “ bold and vain confidence where none can rationally be  
 “ reposed. On this subject, Holy Scripture, the only in-  
 “ fallible directory of human conduct, is express and plain,  
 “ *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him*  
 “ *it is sin.* He is accessory to the death of those who are  
 “ lost through his prejudice, obstinacy, and folly.”

during

during the first forty-two years, and eighty-nine in the forty-two years ending with 1772; so as to make the whole excess of deaths in the latter period 1742."

By this table, as it clearly appears that Inoculation spreads the Small-pox, and by it the number of deaths are increased, it should not be practised any longer; but be legally interdicted, or put under such restrictions as should prevent its infectious influence from being communicated to any other person. Several medical practitioners have absolutely refused to inoculate the Small-pox, from a conscientious principle against endangering the lives of others from the infection which inoculation of the Small-pox has uniformly extended; for, although it may save one person, it may be the means of spreading it to the prejudice of many.

There are severe laws against any one setting his house on fire, because he may destroy his neighbour's life and property. And so it is with Inoculation of the Small-pox: for no limits can be ascertained of the extent of its infectious and destructive poison: whilst the Cow-pock is not catching or infectious, and, if it could be caught, it is not dangerous; for, indeed, it excites but little or no indisposition. It produces  
one



one small spot, or pimple, where the lancet, or thread, touched ; and usually no more.

Under all these advantages, it is earnestly to be wished, that Inoculation by the Cow-pock might become immediately general ; not merely among the affluent, but that they may unite in promoting the most active and enlarged plans for extending it among those who are unable to pay for medical attendance. Plans so interesting to the well-being of the Community and prosperity of the State will doubtless be supported by the liberality of Government, and thereby ultimately eradicate the greatest scourge of human existence that ever desolated the Universe \*.

J. C. LETTSOM.

\* There are, indeed, several institutions where the Poor may receive the Cow-pock gratuitously, as at some of the Dispensaries, and particularly at the Vaccine Institution, Golden-square ; but the number of deaths by the Small-pox is a proof how inadequate they are to the total extinction of this fatal disease.

We are now enabled to add, that a Society upon the most extensive basis has been established, under Royal Patronage, designated, THE ROYAL JENNERIAN SOCIETY FOR THE EXTERMINATION OF THE SMALL-POX ; which seems calculated to realize the title it has adopted, of exterminating the most malignant disease that ever visited suffering humanity.

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

THE Physicians of Geneva have published the following advertisement; which, in that important moment when the children are christened, is delivered by the Clergyman to the godfathers, after the baptism is over; in order to make the people more inclined for the Cow-pock, by presenting to them the Vaccine Inoculation as a matter of conscience.

“ The child that is just christened is, among different other dangers, exposed to become a sacrifice to the Small-pox; a disease that, since the 8th century, has spread itself through Europe in such a manner, that it is morally impossible to preserve the child from it except by Inoculation. Luckily, and by a particular favour of Providence, a discovery has been lately made, confirmed by the test of experience, which is both harmless and secure, and may be employed in all seasons, in weak, tender, and new-born children; a remedy that is never attended with any bad symptom, but of the mildest nature; viz. the Vaccine disease, an affection

affection that has hitherto proved slight and very mild, and affords the inestimable advantage of not being contagious, so that it may be inoculated in a house without any danger to the neighbours, though it at the same time averts for ever the misfortune of receiving the Small-pox.

“ If you, parents, wish to defend this child from that danger, we conjure you to get it immediately inoculated with the Cow pock. Hasten to preserve it from that dangerous disease, which fills your hearts with desolation; and by which your children risk every moment to be infected. Do not deliver them to the nurses before you have rescued them from this danger. The experience and observation of the physicians and surgeons of this place, who know, themselves, the feelings of a father, and who have inoculated their own children, ought to encourage you to follow their example. In the name of humanity, by all that is dear to you, we request you to follow their example; if not, we justify ourselves when once you shed tears for the loss of this child: you have not been willing to avail yourselves of this remedy that was offered you, simple and easy as it is; you have refused it, you have unreasonably doubted

doubted to apply it in time, though the subscribed physicians and surgeons have made it our duty to inoculate every child that has been brought to us without the least recompence. Our fellow-citizens know, that we have hitherto accepted no reward from any person whose circumstances did not allow it."





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